

E. KENNETH SMITH, M.D.

1917-2003

Ken Smith was a long-time friend and colleague and I was his doctor for many years. He was a hearty, decent, robust, independent thinker and kind man with a maverick streak that suited his origin in Texas where he spent his early years. He had harrowing tales of riding on and off the roads with his father in Texas. The family came to California where his father worked as treasurer for Pacific Lumber Company in the good ol' days. Ken was educated in California and went to McGill for his medical training. He served in the military during WWII and did a residency in anesthesiology in Washington, DC followed by a preceptorship for one or two years. He then came to California. He had met and married his lovely wife, Peggy, during his McGill years.

After coming here, they built a home on Bryant Street and raised seven kids. He was a devoted family man. He established the anesthesiology practice in 1950 and was a mainstay for surgeon, Bill Clague and others. At various times, he was Chief of Staff of General and St. Joseph Hospital. He was the President of the Humboldt-Del Norte County Medical Society as well as the Medical Society's Delegate to the California Medical Association. After retirement, he spent time in Incline Village at Lake Tahoe and ended up working in anesthesia at the Reno VA Hospital for a number of years. He also served as physician to HSU for five years. He had a literary bent and was an avid reader. He and Peggy were personal friends of Stephen Leacock, a renowned author. He had tried improving my mind with some really interesting off-the-usual-path books.

His children all grew up to be decent human beings. He also was the grandfather of Jill Bakken, who is an Olympic-level bobsled athlete who competed in the last winter Olympics and indeed won a gold medal in this event. He had reason to be proud of his offspring. He was wonderfully matched and balanced by his wife, Peggy, who was his helpmate and foil who saw him through the last two years of his decline in a devoted and kind fashion. He departed this life in his own home with his kids and wife in attendance. He was a good man and had a good, if not easy, life.

by Jerome Lengyel, M.D.